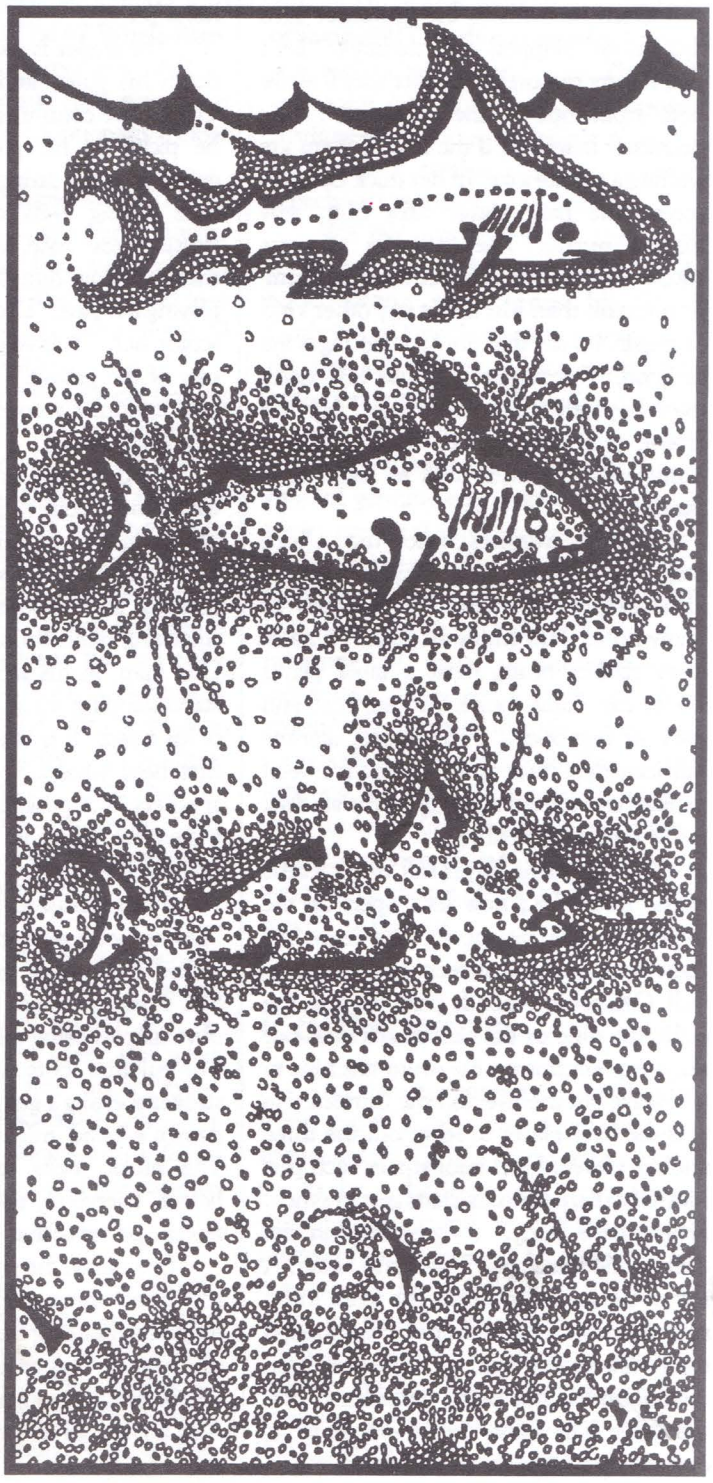
The Interspecies Newsletter

Winter 1994

Published Quarterly by Interspecies Communication Inc.

Transcendental Whale watching



Disappointment. You've just shelled out a thousand dollars plus airfare to spend a week, ostensibly swimming with whales onboard a magnificent eighty-foot ketch, a cetacean research boat named the *Kairos* taking its maiden voyage in the Canary Islands off Morocco. But the workshop leader, an American who runs an organization named Interspecies Communication Inc. has just announced to the group that no one is allowed to jump into the water when the pilot whales draw near. But...but the whales swim to the boat once or twice a day? What's this guy's problem?

It's your fourth day on board, and the "interspecies communicator" is playing his electric guitar plugged directly into a mixing board located on deck. He's teaching a very spartan reggae rhythm to a bass player and a drummer who's tapping with his fingertips on a Roland drum machine. So many good musicians onboard. The music is generally inspiring.

The boat's equipment is equally impressive. All the music is being modulated through racks of electronic equipment in a full-blown recording studio located below decks. It is then transmitted into the water through two odd-shaped underwater speakers hanging off either side of the aft deck. All the underwater sound is picked up through an array of hydrophones hanging off the stern. The received sound passes through the same recording system and is finally beamed back to the musicians through several large air speakers screwed to the rope stays located high above the decks both fore and aft. The musicians playing electric instruments only hear their own sound as it is received by the hydrophones underwater.

"Above everything else, it's the *groove* of the music that attracts the whales," the guitarist declares to the two other musicians experimenting with various rhythms. "They don't care if it's classical music or rock, whether it's played by children or virtuosos. My experience has shown me over and over again that what's important is that the musicians are having a good time playing together. OK, so let's start it again. And this time let's play it as if we're trying to attract whales ten miles away and not just trying to entertain people." He counts off the chords. Four beats on D, four on A, four on B minor, four on G7. He tells them to accent only the upbeats. You recognize the progression as that old Bob Marley tune, "No woman, no cry."

A few minutes pass. Then, without missing a beat, the guitarist makes a statement that makes you shake your head for its illogic. "The whales are ten miles away from the boat, OK? But they hear us. If they started swimming towards us as soon as we began playing, it would take them forty minutes to get here. So we need to keep the groove going for forty minutes without let up. If we do that, I can just about assure you they will come."

Then he turns to the drummer (also the Kairos' skipper) and declares, "Let's give it forty minutes. I predict they'll arrive here from out of the southeast". The drummer laughs as if the two of them are sharing a private joke. In her thick German accent the bass player asks him, why Reggae music? The guitarist answers succinctly, "Reggae is better for whale communication than just about any other kind of music. I'd say that only Indian ragas are as good. The reggae may use less notes than any other modern music, but the groove is a monster. It's hard to play it sitting still. It's even hard to listen to it sitting still."

Fifteen minutes into the chord progression, the guitar player suddenly turns to the bass player. "Don't play so many notes. This isn't four/four. Think of it as sixteen beats, what a tabla player would call *tintal*. Leave the one beat and the nine beat open." Ten minutes later the musicians are once again in synch, several people have started dancing on the aft deck to the infectious rhythm.

But the guitar player still won't let the music rest. "OK, now let's open up the rhythm a little bit more. Let's leave the eight beat, and the sixteen beat empty as well. OK, got it? Nobody plays the one, the eight, the nine or the sixteen. He tells our skipper pounding on the drum machine to also leave out the five and the thirteen. He tells the bass player to leave out the three and the eleven. He demonstrates each part himself to help the musicians gets in synch. People have started congregating on the deck as the music gets better and better. A few of the guests go inside the main cabin and return with hand drums. Even though these newcomers tend to play every beat, their sound is not being transmitted into the water. The leader let's them do whatever they please, with no guidance.

You, yourself, are not a musician. You wonder why anyone would be interested in turning a fun jam session into such a math exercise. But listening more closely, you have to admit that with all those rhythmic holes now opened up in the fabric of the song, the musicians seem to be getting much more skilled at hitting their own specified notes. Each of them is accenting different beats. And yet the music keeps driving forward no matter how big the holes get.

The leader is sweating now. He puts down his guitar and pulls off his t-shirt. The groove continues without him. When he picks up his guitar again, he starts dabbing at the strings in a new way, this time hitting every other upbeat in the classic reggae style. When the bass player tries to follow him, he immediately starts playing her part. "Don't do that," he gently scolds her. "You've got to keep your own part of the groove." He starts playing his new rhythm a second time. This time the bass holds steady.

Suddenly, the music seems to explode with a new power. Simultaneously, more people start to appear from every place on the boat. Now there are twenty people dancing and shouting on the aft deck, smacking hand drums and shaking bells. One man, in his sixties strips naked and starts slapping the mast with the flat palm of his hand. It is at that moment that you first hear whales vocalizing through the speakers. Is it possible? It almost seems as if they are filling in some of those open holes in the rhythm.

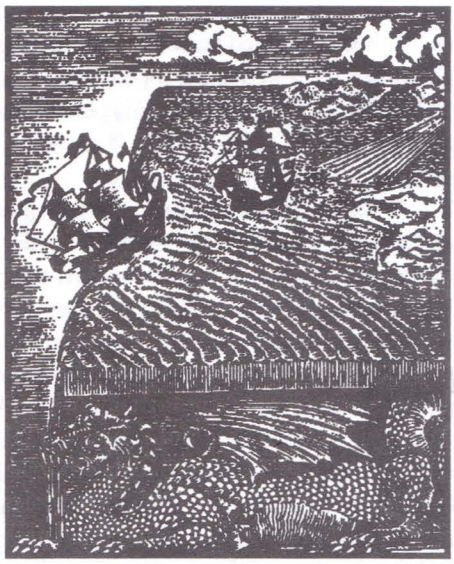
The guitarist turns to the bass player. "Do you see how that slight shift in rhythm kicked the energy up to another level?" She's got a huge smile on her face, obviously enjoying this new kind of music. The guitarist starts fanning half of his upstrokes the way a guitarist playing in James Brown's band might do. Diddle-iddle-it. The music locks in even tighter than before. Everybody listening to it seems to feel the power of that extra musical oomph.

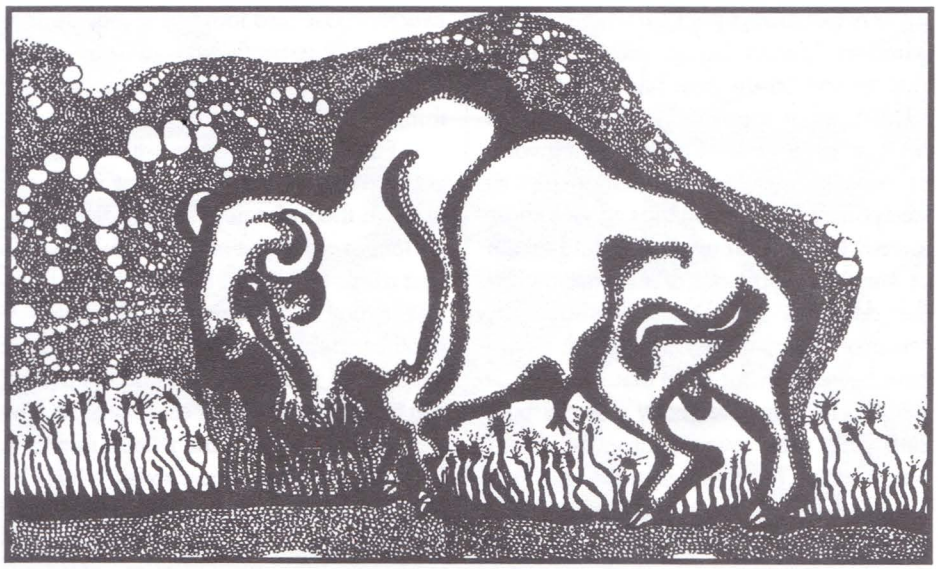
Somehow, the shift also seems to help you listen more attentively to the whale sounds emanating from the speakers. Can you hear it? The whales are whistling and echolocating through the sound system. And about half of their vocalizations seem to land squarely on those two big empty holes in the rhythm. A few people onboard have started scanning the water, trying to sight the characteristic blow or splash of a pilot whale breaking the surface. You too search the water, but see nothing.

You step towards the musicians to listen as the guitar player starts talking music theory to his drummer. You are amazed at the way these two men are able to keep playing their difficult rhythms while talking and laughing at the same time. It makes you feel that you can barely walk and chew gum at the same time.

"Think of the holes as a kind of acoustic invitation. If we keep the groove and, also, if we're just plain lucky, the whales will often understand the invitation for what it is, and try to fill in the holes with their own sound. And believe me, when that happens, and you're standing here on deck working hard to keep the groove steady, you really start to feel that we're all playing in the same band. It's an uncanny feeling, because its so physical, so present tense. And yet the communication is based on a sophisticated rhythm structure that doesn't permit much room for cheating. If it's happening, you simply hear it."

Humans relating to whales as members of an interspecies band! You can accept that. But what about the whales? How do they feel it? The guitarist continues, "Most musicians perceive the groove as greater than the sum of its parts. It's sound transformed into pure energy. It's as if your body and mind become a





channel for expressing a music that exists somewhere outside yourself. And yet everybody knows it when it suddenly locks in. It's like creating a common heartbeat Everybody feels it—musicians, non-musicians, whales. Look over there beyond the bow. Even the seagulls are coming in close to investigate it. I tell you, if extra-terrestrials ever land on Earth, the politicians and the scientists should stay away from them. They should send in a good reggae band to make the first contact."

Ten more minutes pass. Suddenly pilot whales appear from out of the south-east. How could he have known that? Maybe it was just a cheeky guess. Everyone on board is excited now. You feel like you want to jump out of your skin. Everyone not attached to a musical instrument is pointing at the whales and smiling, singing, whistling. The sea is a warm 85 degrees here. No waves. You rip off your clothes and stand on the boat's gunwhales about to jump in the water. But the expert shouts at everybody to back off. He abruptly stops the music. An intense silence rushes in from all sides.

"There won't be any jumping in the water with whales until we're certain that they are ready to receive us. Please bear with me. If you want to do it my way, then I don't expect anyone will get to swim with the whales during this entire next week. It could be a month or more before anyone even jumps in the water when the whales swim close to the boat."

"OK, we've played enough music. Let's all stand in a line and watch the whales swim away from the boat. Come on everybody. Give them up. Don't get addicted. Don't give them the power to make your day. They don't want that responsibility. Especially from human beings.

The guitarist gathers the crew and the guests together into a circle on the aft deck. Everybody sits down and listens to the whales mewing and whistling and clicking through the loudspeakers. But the guitarist seems to be barely listening to them, and instead starts to uncork a long story about the pilot whales' inexplicable behavior of stranding on beaches all around the world. "Fifty years ago, nine hundred of them stranded in a single day on a beach along the east coast of South America. These animals not only seem to know how to die consciously, but they seem to have turned it into a community event. Who can explain it?"

Then, the other American onboard the Kairos, an American Indian spiritual teacher named Manitonquat, tells the group a story about watching pilot whales strand off a beach in Cape Cod. What a sad experience it was.

You've also read something about whale strandings but didn't know that pilot whales strand more than any other cetacean species. The guitarist mentions that several members of the crew have been practicing chorale music everyday since you came on board. Their most accomplished rendition is a Mozart Requiem. "Look at this way. The Mozart is probably one of the best human statements ever made about death. Since these whales seem to be masters of accepting and even inviting death into their lives, I think we should all stand up now and sing our own species' best death song to these pilot whales who seem to be connoisseurs of such things.

We look a relaxed group. Everyone onboard is barefoot. One man is wearing a *Kairos* T-shirt but nothing below it. One woman is dressed in a sari, but it only reaches to her hips. Three people, including yourself, are stark naked. The guitarist is sipping on a glass of port wine and picking the sunburned skin flaking off his nose.

Now we all line up along the starboard side of the boat, and watch the black pilot whales rolling and spouting in the waves just twenty feet in front of us. A few of the fifteen animals must be eighteen feet long. There are also two babies swimming among them. The whales are moving very slowly now, and in fact seem to be watching us in their own way even as we watch them.

The chorale leader is the same woman who played reggae bass so effectively just a few moment's earlier. She waves an arm once and the air is suddenly filled with the Mozart sung in a clear multi-parted harmony. It sounds achingly beautiful—ethereal, as if a shard of sunlight suddenly shone on the deck ready to beam the boat, its passengers, and the whales directly up to heaven. On and on the music rises and falls, swells and finally relents.

But watching the water intently, you are unable to observe any alteration in the whale's movement. Can they even hear this unamplified music sung into the air? And if they do hear it, are the whale's supposed to respond better because this is "a death song". Are they supposed to recognize it as Mozart as well? Sure it's a good metaphor, but it also means that no one in this group is ever going to get praised for their objective rigor.

You chuckle to yourself and wonder why you feel so frustrated about not getting to swim with the whales. Why does it matter so much to you? Is it really a kind of consumerist addiction like the guitar player insists? You sigh, thinking about the

craziness of it all. The holes in the music. The groove. The Mozart. Too much ritual and not enough science. Then again, no one here is trying to be logical. If the reggae felt physical and very direct, then the impact of the Mozart is sublime and symbolic. And it has brought tears to your eyes. Who knows what interspecies communication signifies. What's the alternative? Catching a bottlenose dolphin, keeping it in a concrete pool and training it to respond to visual cues with a dead fish as the reward? The God of information speaks, but says nothing about anything except our own misplaced human values.

Or how about the Time magazine article about giant resort hotels in Las Vegas keeping dolphins in tiny tanks, and using them in a program to make a statement about ecology. But one owner finally admitted that the dolphins serve the same purpose that a free scotch and soda used to serve—a cheap means of inducing people to leave their rooms and lose money.

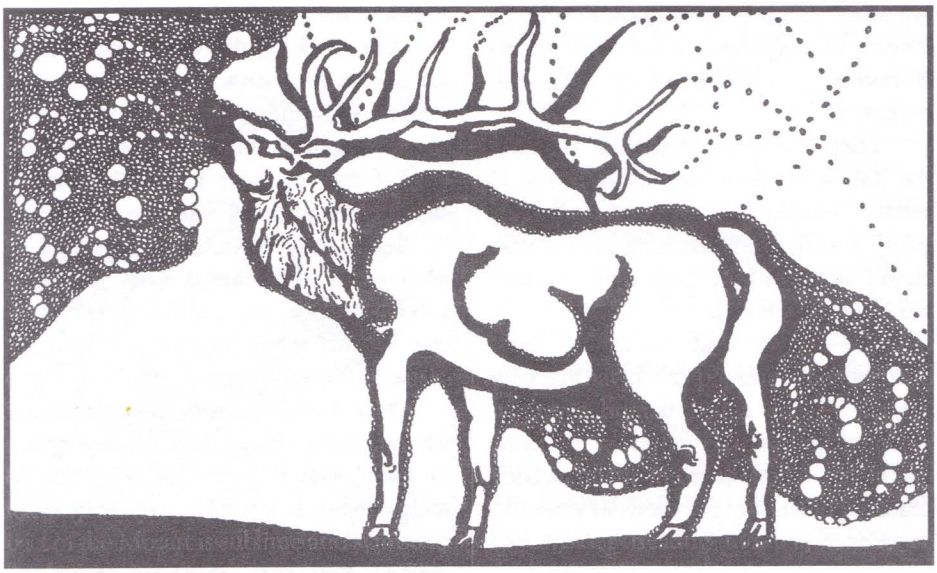
For that matter, who does it really serve when pilgrims go recreational swimming all day with dolphins in one of the happening places like the sandbanks northwest of Grand Bahama Island? You went there. But the experience left you feeling a bit empty. All the guests seemed to be indulging themselves in an exotic explorer's fantasy, swimming with dolphins this season and perhaps climbing Killimanjaro next season.

Sure, everyone on that Bahama dive boat felt some measure of that distinct mystery that always pops up whenever and wherever human beings meet dolphins. But no one on the boat had a clue about what it might mean to stop, even for an hour, a day, a week. What would it involve to consider treating the relationship so freely offered by the dolphins as something sacred? But no tour operator would dream of keeping people out of the water when the dolphins swim near. Without any sense of a long-term vision, there would have been no point to do that.

Then again, everybody was too busy satisfying their own short-term needs which may be precisely why no one considered a long term relationship. In its own strange way, That experience seemed the whale-watching analog to the parallel, short-term vision that destroyed so much of the American economic dream back in the 1980's. Here you are, prancing about on this sailboat stark naked, and and all you can think about is saving the world.

You scan the happy faces around you and notice that just about everyone is singing some part of the Mozart even if they don't know the words. The whales are vocalizing like crazy. You can't help but wonder. Could there be something important getting communicated here? Even if it makes no sense.

The whales have started to swim away from the boat. They are moving very, very slowly. Likewise, without anyone calling for a return to the meeting, the people are also very very slowly, moving towards the aft deck where they sit together in circle. Everyone else also looks as if they want to say something profound, but don"t know what it is. No one seems able to say anything at all.



Finally, you let loose with a big sigh and turn to the guitarist, asking if you can jump in the water now that the whales are no longer right next to the boat. "No, let's wait a little bit longer. Listen, I know I said that no one should jump into the water for another couple of weeks, but if you really need to do it, then be my guest. But first, you have to let me give it some context. The relationship between the whales and us is brand new . As we all saw today, it has a lot of bright potential. It is a lovely thing, but it is also fragile. There may be more at stake here than you getting a nice rush and maybe taking some underwater photos to show your friends back home. I think we need to relate to these whales as if we're going to get to know them over ten years time. So let's do it gently. Let's do it with respect. Let's do it for keeps."

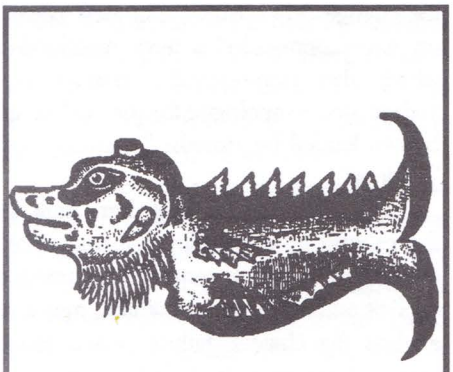
He takes a sip from his glass of Port wine and grins. "But here's an idea some of you might want to try. When the whales get a couple of hundred meters from the boat, somebody might start playing music through the underwater sound system again. Try to attract them a second time. And if they come close to the boat, then immediately stop playing again. When they swim a couple of hundred meters away, start it again. If we do that enough times the whales will quickly figure it out that we want to play a game about space and time.

"We need to do that two or or three times in succession, and then repeat it over two or three days. On the fourth day, two people can jump in the water during the third pass. But when they land in the water they need to immediately start swimming *away* from the whales. Don't worry. If the whales want to come close, they can catch us anytime they want. You see, the whole point is that the whales will start to trust our intentions. Who knows, They may eventually want to swim with us as much as we want to swim with them. That's when it really starts getting good."

An hour passes. The whales never did come back although their whistling can still be heard occasionally through the

underwater sound system. The sun is shining brightly. The boat is sitting over 2500 meters of deep ocean just twelve miles south of the sharp black and red cliffs of the island of Gomera. Twenty miles further east, the huge 14,000 volcano on Tenerife looms full on the horizon. It is difficult to get the full measure of this mountain, and your eyes keep returning to it like a piece of iron to a magnet.

You are lying on the deck, lulled by the gentle rocking of the boat. The whistling of the whales pulls at your imagination as the call of the sirens must have pulled at the mind and body of Odysseus. The sound of them fills up the atmosphere of the boat like some extraterrestrial *muzak*, transporting your mind and your emotions to places you never imagined possible.



pilot whale, ca. 1734

The guitar player sits down next to you on the topdeck. He pulls out a book and begins to read. Your English is poor; the cover says *The Brother's K*, but you have no idea what the letter "K" signifies.

Finally, you can't resist asking a question that has been on your mind ever since the whales first appeared two hours before. You turn to him, clear your throat and speak. "Tell me, Jim. How did you know that the dolphins would come from the seatheast? And how did you know that they were ten miles away and it would take them forty minutes to arrive here?

He puts down his book and stares you full in the face. Then he grins. "I guess I'm a person who lives by guessing. Think about it. My work is communicating with whales. Anybody who's had that kind of a job for twenty years must have turned his whole life into a big guess".

You look at him and purse your lips, making it clear that, just this once, you want an answer and not a Koan.

He sighs. The grin vanishes. "I suppose what you really want to know is if the whales made contact with me, mind to mind. That's it, isn't it? I'm sorry, but I don't have a good answer to that. But I can tell you, making guesses like I did today means that the question is always going to come up when we're working with whales. It comes up for me too." He pauses a moment and then grins again. "That was a pretty good guess I made today, wasn't it?"

—Jim Nollman, onboard the Kairos

Selling It

Without actually planning on it, we suddenly find the IC office filled to the brim with items to sell. It's as if a little voice has started whispering in our non-profit ear, making us doubly aware of our current reliance on philanthropic money; whispering, advizing us to advertise, distribute, sell, diversify, do it! If nothing else, the sight of all these overflowing closets and shelves is a sure sign that we need to let you, our members know something about these new products.

Each summer, between 1977 and 1992, IC produced a communication project with the orcas who reside off the northeast tip of Vancouver Island. During that fifteen year period, we invited over a hundred musicians, artists, children, and even three Tibetan Lamas to join our wilderness camp and to interact with these vocal whales through the underwater sound system we installed in a large boat. But during the summer of 1988 we first observed the whales losing interest in our music-making activities. They were less interested still in 1989 and, in fact, became more aloof each year after that.

We perceived a direct correlation between the whale's creative withdrawal and the increase of boat traffic in the area—especially the growth of the whale-watching industry. Despite the fact that we had always let the whales initiate contact with us, we became increasingly sensitive about adding yet another level of noisy human presence in a place that had been wilderness just ten years earlier. It was time for us to let go.

With that in mind, we organized our last Orca Project during the summer of 1992 and invited video producer, Jonathan Churcher, along to document it. It proved an intense three weeks both on the water and in camp. Each of us spent time coming to terms with a wilderness camp that had served us so well for so many years. Both individually and together, we let go of these whales who had affected our lives so profoundly. Then, midway through the trip, one member of our group, Jill Sherman, got mauled by a mountain lion

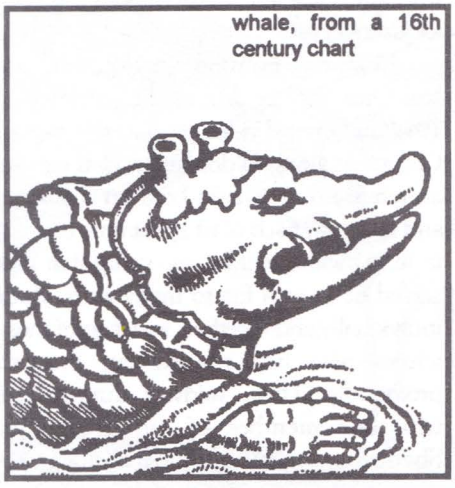
who wandered into camp one afternoon. Jill had to be hospitalized. The mountain lion was shot to the dismay of most of our crew. Finally, sailing home on our 65 foot chartered boat, we stopped at an ancient native site far off the beaten path. While there, we were greeted by a pack of wolves who made splendid music with us.

Jonathan's half-hour video is now complete. It is entitled *Orcananda*, after the tongue-in-cheek name we dubbed our camp many years earlier. Indeed, *Orcananda* is a professional-quality document. In fact, it seems a bit ironic that, although the Orca Project was also filmed by some of the biggest names in network TV, Jonathan's humble quasi-volunteer effort captures the essence of the interspecies vision better than other videos made with a hundred times the budget.

For the soft-sell: we at IC feel it is a worthwhile document for anyone who has ever been interested in the work of this organization. It should especially interest the hundred or so people who passed through our wilderness camp during the years of that project.

And for the hard sell: Buy it. Support our work. Please, if you can, help us distribute it. Help us present it to a TV producer if you can. YES, That's it! We'd love to sell it to TV for mass viewing and big bucks.

The video is both sponsored and partially owned by this organization. Whatever its destiny, whether it is grandiose or obscure, right now we want to make it available to IC members. It's VHS format. And you can buy it for a $25 check to IC while supplies last.



whale, from a 16th century chart

Postcards

Another new product. After years of merely talking about it, we finally went ahead and printed postcards from some of the original artwork that has graced the front page of past issues of the Intespecies newsletter. Out of forty or fifty possibilities, we settled on four, mainly chosen because of their stylistic similarity. Buffalo, elk, duck, and woodrat. The first three are printed herein. But please be aware that what you see here was reproduced and cropped using a cheap handscanner. The postcards of the pen-and-ink originals are much more finely rendered. The woodrat appeared in the last newsletter.

If these postcards start to sell in a meaningful manner, we will use the proceeds to print four more postcards. We are asking $6 for a set of four. $50 for a dozen sets. Why not buy a few sets?

Two Books

The following tale is recounted in the hope that it may contain some cautionary advice for any incipient writers about to take the plunge into the trepidatious whirlpool of big time book publishing.

It is hard to explain how an author feels when he is notified that the two books he has taken so much time and intellectual energy to write are being cut from his publisher's list. One thing is certain. It is frustrating for an author to learn that his books got cut although they are still selling, although not briskly. Each of them has been translated into four languages. Both are selling especially well in Japan.

Unfortunately, this author's publisher is Bantam books, the largest publisher in America, whose unstated policy is that a book that sells less than a few thousand copies a year is considered more of an encumbrance than a boon. Therein lies perhaps the foremost reason why an author might consider signing with a small publisher.

It is also difficult to explain how an author feels when his corporate publisher has become so faceless that no one on the staff bothers to notify him that his book has been cut from their list. In the case of *Spiritual Ecology*, I learned about it well after it had already happened, and in the same phone call that informed me that no copies existed anywhere–they had all been sold, remaindered, or simply incinerated. This author was left with just a dozen copies. All of the rest are gone forever.

Consider that last sentence an apt epitaph for *Spiritual Ecology*. The last dozen copies of the English version seem to reside on our shelves as a kind of memorial to the two long years this author spent pecking away at the keyboard. Is there anyone out there who would settle for the Italian, the French, the Japanese versions?

On that note, please permit me a brief moment of self-conscious soul-searching. Granted, there were problems with the book. *Spiritual Ecology* was hurried to get into print by Earthday. In the process of meeting that deadline, the difficult themes presented never simmered long enough to find their true voice. Ironically, the voice this author sought but never found finally emerged in four essays written in quick succession during the next year *after* its publication.

A major problem arose because this author had chosen to name his book *The Seventh Generation*, in honor of its central metaphor taken from the Iroquois. But the editor at Bantam rejected that name outright as too obscure, although she brightened immeasurably when I told her that this was the image and the metaphor I used to convey a sense of an emergent "spiritual ecology". "Yes, that's it", she answered.

Worrying too much about my chances of ever grabbing the brass ring offered by such a publishing juggernaut, I agreed to the change. My mistake. The new pasted-on name demanded a new introduction which this non-scientific, non-religious author used to apologize for getting lassoed by two loaded buzzwords: "spiritual" and "ecology".

But it's not all the publisher's fault. In the process of rewriting the introduction, the book also lost its center. It became too explicit and self-absorbed which, may also explain the chronic failure of too much writing that gets itself labeled *newage*.

Does there exist a publisher who would be genuinely interested to publish

an overhaul of *Spiritual Ecology*? I can only hope so. I would give the book back its rightful title as well as an all-new introduction. The ill-fitting chapters would be replaced by those later essays on human population, local activism, nature films, and animal rights. Not coincidentally, the latter three essays first made their appearance in this newsletter and were later reprinted by nearly twenty magazines.

In hindsight, it seems that the voice I sought for the book has finally been found. Unfortunately, the few publishers who have considered the proposal to republish, have answered that the book already got its chance and failed. So it goes.

Just this month, Bantam also dropped *Dolphin Dreamtime*. Fortunately, in that case IC got the opportunity to buy out the remainder. In typical fashion, Bantam acted petulent and impatient about it, and gave me just an hour to decide how many copies we wanted. I had no time to think, no plan about how IC might distribute the books. Nonetheless, I acted on it. IC bought quite a few, in fact we splurged. We bought a third of the remainder, or 600 copies. That's an awful lot of books for an organization that has no real marketing program in place. Quite honestly, we are not yet sure what we plan to do with so many copies.

As in the video and the postcards, we herein declare an official period of testing the waters of retail capitalism by offering copies of *Dolphin Dreamtime* at the unheard of bargain of $8 apiece. Please. A dozen copies for $80. A gross for $800? If any readers have an idea on how to market them painlessly, please contact us. Maybe there's even a job here for some enterprising marketer.

Two Audio Cassettes

Orcas Greatest Hits is a compilation of some of the more provocative musical exchanges that occurred on our Orca Projects–exchanges between human musicians and the wild orcas who inhabit the waters off Vancouver island. The original recordings were made between 1977 and 1985, and the cassette was assembled for sale in 1986.

What makes *Orcas Greatest Hits* so original is the fact that all of the recordings were made underwater. They are also mostly unedited, meaning that there are no overdubs or subtle audio effects to sweeten the communication that occurred betwen species. What you hear on the cassette is exactly the way it occurred with the whales. In one case, the best parts of an exchange that occurred with many orcas over three days time is spliced together to make a 25 minute piece entitled The 47 Whale Raga.

This tape sells especially well at conferences, when an audience gets to hear a few selections with commentary before committing to buy.

A small Los Angeles-based record company once made IC an offer to buy the tape for distribution. But the deal was sour; it mostly seemed that we would lose all future rights to the tape for a couple of hundred dollars at the start.

We occasionally consider publicising the cassette, either through magazine ads or, even better, as an active promotion to far-sighted record company. We are fairly confident that it would sell with just a little bit more attention. After all, without any advertising beyond this newsletter or at conferences, we have distributed more than a thousand cassettes in the past eight years. I'll repeat myself. With the advent of our other new items for sale, there may even be a job here at IC, for someone interested in marketing IC products on commission. Serious inquiries are welcome. Here's a bit of the liner notes that puts the cassette into context:

...Some people choose to interpret these pieces as a new direction in avant-garde music. Fortunately, the very best interspecies dialogues are often the most musical. But there's not much "avant garde" about it. The so-called primitives have been talking and singing with animals since before history. Consider this cassette and electronic update.

...The possibility of direct communication between human beings and other animal species is so far outside our cultural context, that for someone to accept such a premise, he or she first needs to experience it personally. That is one reason that music is such a potent research medium–it is entirely capable of engaging the *listener* every bit as much as it does the original *player*. If it is indeed happening, then you simply hear it.

A Fish That's a Song is a horse of a different color. It started out as a long-playing record by Folkways, entitled *Playing Music with Animals*, a compilation of some of IC's early communication work with turkeys, wolves, and orcas. Then Folkways, was later sold to the Smithsonian Institute and various recordings from their enormous catalog started getting repackaged in topical collections.

We felt honored when one of our songs with animal accompaniment was added–along with songs by Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger among others– to the new label's first re-issue, a children's collection entitled *A Fish that's a Song*.

We believe that this is one of the great children's albums ever made. It has the ring of genuine eccentricity about it; the songs are great, and you've never heard most of them. The cassette includes scratchy music recorded back in the 1930's and new stuff from today. There is an instrumental piece of merry-go-round music that always gets a giant smile from anyone who hears it. Another song about somebody building a house "hammering with my hammer" is impossible to shake once you've heard it. And our own oddball a capella version of *Froggy went a Courtin'* sung with a chorus of 300 turkeys fits right in with all the rest.

Conference

The Japanese conference described in some depth in the last newsletter, and sponsored by ICERC, seems to be shaping up to be the first ever international conference devoted to communication between human beings and cetaceans. IC has recently been invited by ICERC, to travel to several other sites around the country to present its vision of relations between species. For those interested in attending we suggest sending a FAX to ICERC at (3)3280-0052. See you there.